City of Greenwood Comprehensive Plan

2007 - 2027

INDIANA

SECTION SEVEN

Old Town

HNTB





Introduction

A vibrant downtown is a sign of an economically healthy and stable community. Although the role of downtown has changed in most American small towns over time, the common denominator for those that are considered successful is the ability to change with the times.

Yard sticks once used to measure the success of a central business district, such as retail activity and entertainment venues may not be the best methods for gauging success or vibrancy today.

Just as lifestyles have changed over the decades with more women in the workforce, busier schedules, smaller families, and the availability of goods and services via the Internet, so too has the retail sector changed.

At one time, downtown department stores dominated the shopping scene only to be abandoned for the suburban indoor mall as a response to the automobile and the advent of central air conditioning creating a comfortable, all-weather shopping environment. The strip center also came on the scene as schedules grew busier and customers desired a quick in and out experience. These have been followed by power centers and now the lifestyle center, which, in many ways, seeks to re-create a downtown experience.

We also have witnessed the change in housing choices over the years in response to the life cycle of individuals as well as the social and economic environment. At one point on the housing cycle our small towns featured dense, walkable, mixed-income, urban neighborhoods with a variety of choices from single-family homes to live-over-work structures.

The automobile took us through the early suburbs with WWII tract housing and the more recent single-family, gated-communities and garden apartments.

Today, even the housing market is changing in response to the desire many people have to return to traditional neighborhoods, with amenities such as neighborhood retail, trails, gathering spaces, and a porch culture that promotes social interaction.

These trends and others bode well for the future of small town downtown areas like Greenwood's Old Town.



Existing Old Town

Greenwood has always depended on Indianapolis in terms of Indianapolis' role as the focal point of state government, major retail and entertainment activities, however as a relatively densely populated area, a small downtown area emerged to meet the needs of residents and travelers to and from Indianapolis.

The area of Main and Madison saw a number of multi-story structures built to accommodate commercial activity at street level and offices or residences above. Over time, some of the structures have been lost to redevelopment efforts or other forms of demolition, such as fire or condemnation.

Today, the downtown area, or Old Town as it has become known, still boasts the community's only concentration of historic structures, maintains a mix of uses, and includes the most visible gathering spots for residents from throughout the community.

Physical Characteristics

Old Town is characterized by a mix of structures from a variety of time periods and a mix of uses from recreation to retail, housing to professional services, dining to government services and more. Some of the businesses located

in the district have become local institutions and serve as destinations for long-time residents, new arrivals, and visitors who are in-the-know.

Some of the structures in the district, especially along Madison Avenue, originally designed as homes have been converted to offices, restaurants and retail outlets. Because of the increase in traffic over the years as Madison became a major north-south arterial, these conversions have served as buffers for the neighborhoods located to the rear of the structures. They also provide walkable options for goods and services for residents of those neighborhoods.

The major streets in Old Town are relatively narrow as are many of the sidewalks. Madison Avenue has been retrofitted with a center turn lane through the district, eliminating any on-street parking opportunities and necessitating the narrow sidewalks. The east side of Madison Avenue is visually and functionally dominated by large utility poles placed within the sidewalks, narrowing them even more.

The neighborhood streets vary somewhat in design, but serve a grid pattern function well by encouraging lower speeds and connectivity within the area.

Public surface parking lots are available to visitors at no charge and are located in several areas of the district, yet lack the visibility required to promote their use.

The city has invested heavily in the Old Town area by locating facilities for police, fire, parks and recreation, as well as the Greenwood Community Center within the district.

Location

At one time, Old Town was the geographic center of Greenwood. Over time, the city has annexed to the south and east to such an extent that Old Town now finds itself in the northern and somewhat western quadrant of the city. It is located just south of the regional shopping center (Greenwood Park Mall area) and just north of the School campus on Madison Avenue.

Old Town includes the historic district and surrounding neighborhoods and is easily accessed from all directions via Main Street and Madison Avenue. While no formal boundaries exist, this plan considers the Old Town area as that part of Greenwood located roughly between Fry Road, Home Avenue, US 31, and Polk Street. Refer to the Old Town Map.

Existing Old Town







Role

Like many business districts, the Old Town area has found it necessary to redefine its role in the community over time. No longer does Old Town find itself as the center for local retail or professional services and it is no longer the local hub of nightlife or entertainment. Old Town is not currently a major attraction for tourists or the center of local government.

Today, the downtown area does serve as a cultural center for the community and is home to the only major public gathering space in Greenwood. Some government services and offices are located in the district and the

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neighborhoods have maintained their vibrancy and stability over time. Many of the businesses located in Old Town are unique destinations and locally owned and operated.

Old Town's Future

Old Town, perhaps more so than any other district in the community, has the potential to become a community icon for Greenwood. As commercial areas in other parts of the community continue to lose their local identity to that of franchise architecture and signage, Old Town maintains elements of Greenwood's past which can serve as the foundation for retooling an identity that is meaningful to current and future generations.

The future success of the Old Town district will depend on its ability to redefine its image, its assets, and Goal #1: Make Old Town a thriving and vibrant district that becomes a cultural and government destination for all of Greenwood

Goal #2: Encourage a vibrant economy for Old Town

Goal #3: Make Old Town attractive to developers

Goal #4: Beautify Old Town

Goal #5: Improve Main Street traffic flow

Goal #6: Ensure that Old Town is served by adequate, attractive, and obvious parking options

Goal #7: Establish a larger historic district in Old Town

its role in the community. In fact, the sub committee has already taken the first step in that direction by changing the long-varied spelling from updating the phrase "Olde Towne" to "Old Town" and making the application of the designation for Old Town consistent.

That sub committee of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee also developed several "big ideas" to help achieve the goals set for the Old Town district:

Old Town Master Plan

The development of a small area plan to serve as the master plan for the future development of Old Town is critical to the successful implementation of all other strategies described by this section of the plan. Because a comprehensive plan is, by definition, a broad brush stroke with a 20-yr horizon, it cannot and should not provide planning at the level required to deal with the number, type and detail of ideas required for revitalizing an area such as Old Town. Detailed land use, redevelopment site, pedestrian, programming, parking, and transportation planning will also be included in the master plan.

Center of Local Government

As the city begins to examine its options for the location of government offices, the civic commitment and feasibility of a location in Old Town should be considered, including the idea of a mixed use structure that might feature a public plaza or town green. The consolidation of city offices into an appropriate adaptive reuse or new structure that evokes the respect and dignity of local government and provides for the efficient operation of services should be criteria of this effort.

Role of the Local Government

Investments to the public infrastructure by the City of Greenwood are imperative in the community's ability to attract private investments for improvements to adjacent properties.

Center of Local Government



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Thus the local government should lead by example and establish programs for investing in the infrastructure of Old Town.

Market Plaza

Several ideas to redevelop the market plaza area into a local destination have been discussed. The new master plan should consider this project as a major anchor project for the revitalization of Old Town. Detailed planning due to current floodplain and floodway conditions will be required.

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